



16 February 2012

Dear Members of the Community Preservation Committee,

As members of the Leadership Board of the Acton-Boxborough Farmers Market (ABFM), which will enter its fourth season this June, we want to share some thoughts on the matter of the proposed Windsor Building item under consideration.

Broadly speaking, the ABFM is very supportive of efforts to preserve, restore, and revivify the Windsor Building as an historical building and potential community resource. We are also rather fond of it as the home of the corner "shed" that houses our ABFM equipment and materials!

We'd like to call your attention to several facts about the Acton-Boxborough Farmers Market, and its role in the community and relationship to the Town.

- From our start-up, the Town, through the Town Manager, the BoS, and the Police, Fire, Health, and Highway departments, has been an enthusiastic supporter of the ABFM. We've enjoyed great communication and cooperation with Town staff and elected officials. The material and fiscal relationship between the Town and the ABFM comprises: the modest fee the ABFM is charged annually; ABFM use of the Windsor Building shed; ABFM use of Town-owned street barriers for market days; permission for market-goers to park at the West Acton fire station; and the mounting of our over-street banner a couple of times a season (as the Town does for any community group). We don't use any police services on a regular basis; fortunately, in three seasons we've needed to contact the Police department only once.
- The ABFM Leadership Board is proud of the positive and enthusiastic support the ABFM gets from the community. We really do get great feedback; most market-goers, local businesses, and neighbors would assert that we are a center of community vitality and a contributor to the quality of life that Acton taxpayers repeatedly say they value. And although we do count on the Town for important infrastructure support, we operate primarily thanks to hundreds of hours of volunteer work, fees paid by vendors, and the support of our Partners, Sponsors, and private donors. All that effort blooms during the season in a community institution that attracts hundreds of people, each market season Sunday, who avail themselves of fresh, healthful, locally produced food; education about health, environment, and community; and the community-building and camaraderie of the ABFM.
- Some West Acton businesses (eg., Red, White and Brew) have reported increased business during market hours because the ABFM draws people to West Acton and, while there, they often frequent other businesses.
- Last season, the ABFM became SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) enabled, making fresh foods more available to more people. We will continue to promote this important aspect of our mission.

- Market-goers benefit from our arrangement for parking at, in addition to the fire station, the lots of several private businesses that are not open on Sunday (our market day). Most market-goers park on Windsor Street and at the fire station.
- The ABFM takes great care to treat Pearl Street and our abutters respectfully, and to promote and support our West Acton business district. For example, we have repeatedly declined to have vendors who would sell beverages or ready-to-eat foods, preferring instead to send folks to Acton retailers for such things. We also have enjoyed the support, as Partners, of several West Acton businesses (e.g., OMR, Middlesex Savings Bank, Graphic Connections), as well as other town businesses not located in West Acton Village. ABFM staff and volunteers ensure that the street is clean after market closes, and we personally take away all trash and recycling that gets generated at the market; we also recycle vendor materials (packaging) returned to the market by market-goers. In 2010, we replaced the ramp leading to the shed (on the southeast corner of the Windsor Building) because the current one was rotting through.
- The ABFM has greatly appreciated the West Acton Citizens' Library's opening during market hours (which provides bathroom use for ABFM staff and vendors). We believe the library and the ABFM have been mutually supportive of, and benefited from, one another; it's our understanding that library patronage has been boosted by the Sunday traffic during market season.

Were the CPC to decide to grant the \$50,000 for the current Windsor Building proposal, we would be happy for the changes to the interior of the building, and certainly it would be helpful to us for special events, winter market days, et al. that might be sited there, with the Town's permission. And yet . . . given the broad fiscal landscape in which we all are currently operating, and the budgetary demands to be met and decisions to be made, we think it's a good idea to defer this item for a year or two.

Last, the ABFM would be very interested, when we are more deeply established, in the possibility of partnering with the Town and/or other community group(s) to help support the needs of the Windsor Building. The ABFM is not a for-profit organization, and therefore doesn't have much in the way of assets, but there may be small financial and other ways in which the ABFM could cooperate to make the Windsor Building a more functional and accessible resource for the community.

Thank you for consideration of our thoughts.

Debra Simes

for the ABFM Leadership Board:

Jennifer Taylor Campbell, Kennett Coleman, Rosie DeQuattro, Debra Simes, Helen Payne Watt

Cc: Acton Board of Selectmen

The mission of the ABFM is to showcase local sustainable agriculture and promote organic practices; to educate the public on food and agriculture topics; to provide for direct, informed relationships between farmers and consumers; and to benefit local farmers and the local economy, as well as public health, community vitality, and regional environmental and economic sustainability.